

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4616

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 3875

EO: 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CO

SUBJ: MID-TERM ELECTIONS PARTIAL RETURNS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: BOTING IN THE APRIL 18 MID-TERM ELECTIONS WAS ORDERLY THROUGHOUT COLOMBIA. THE TURNOUT WAS LIGHT, EVEN FOR A MID-TERM ELECTION. THE CONSERVATIVES ENJOYED A SURPRISING SUCCESS AND MAY GET CLOSE TO 40 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL VOTE. THE LIBERAL PARTY, HOWEVER, REMAINED FIRMLY IN THE MAJORITY POSITION WITH A PROJECTED TOTAL OF BETTER THAN 50 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL VOTE. MEI-THER CARLOS LLERAS NOR AMBASSADOR TURBAY WAS ABLE TO EMERGE WITH A CLEARCUT ELECTORAL VICOTRY IN THE RACE FOR THE 1978 LIBERAL PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION. THE FAR LEFT, DESPITE BETTER FINANCING AND ORGANIZATION, ACHIEVED ONLY ITS CUSTOMARY 3 PERCENT OF THE VOTE. ANAPO TRAILED EVEN THE FAR LEFT IN EARLY RETURNS AND HAS CEASED TO BE A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN COLOMBIAN POLITICS. END SUMMARY

2. VOTING IN THE APRIL 18 MID-TERM ELECTIONS WAS ORDERLY THROUGHOUT COLOMBIA. THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTS OF VIOLENCE AT POLLING PLACES. (FIVE BOMBS WERE DETONATED IN BOGOTA, BUT NOT AT POLLING PLACES.) AS IN 1974, THE ATMOSPHERE AT THE VOTING TABLES WAS FRIENDLY, WITH GOOD-NATURED JOSHING ON THE PART OF POLL WATCHERS AND VOTERS ALIKE. ARMY UNITS WERE IN EVIDENCE THROUGHOUT THE CITY BUT WERE NOT CALLED UPON FOR MORE THAN PATROL ACTIVITIES.

3. EARLY RETURNS INDICATE A VOTER PARTICIPATION IN THE 25-30 PERCENT AREA. THE LIGHT TURNOUT REFLECTS A NUMBER OF FACTORS, IN-

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CENT AREA. THE LIGHT TURNOUT REFLECTS A NUMBER OF FACTORS, IN-

CLUDING THE COLOMBIAN TRADITION OF AVOIDING MID-TERM ELECTIONS. (THE 1968 AND 1972 MID-TERM TESTS, ENLIVENED BY THE CHALLENGE OF GENERAL ROJAS' ANAPO, ONLY BROUGHT OUT 36 PERCENT OF THE BOTERS.) THIS YEAR, THE COINCIDENCE OF ELECTION DAY AND THE EASTER VACATION PERIOD FURTHER CUT THE VOTE, AS DID THE POOR WEATHER AND THE LACK OF ANY INTERESTING NEW FACES ON THE POLITICAL SCENE.

4. THE EMBASSY WILL, WHEN LESS FRAGMENTARY RETURNS ARE AVAILABLE, FORWARD AN ANALYSIS OF THE VOTING. THE PARTIAL FIGURES DO, HOWEVER, PROVIDE SOME GUIDEPOSTS.

5. CONSERVATIVE RESURGENCE. THE CONSERVATIVES ENJOYED A SURPRISING SUCCESS IN THE EARLY VOTING AND IT NOW APPEARS LIKELY THAT THEY WILL COME CLOSE TO THE 40 PERCENT SHARE OF VOTE THAT THEIR LEADERS SAY IS NECESSARY TO KEEP THE PARTY A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE LIBERALS. THE INTENSIVE CONSERVATIVE CAMPAIGN, ESPECIALLY IN WESTERN COLOMBIA, AND THE APRIL 14 DEATH OF FORMER PRESIDENT AND PARTY LEADER MARIANO OSPINA UNDOUBTEDLY HELPED TO BRING OUT THE CONSERVATIVE VOTE. IN ADDITION, THE PROTEST VOTE, TO BE EXPECTED AT MID-TERM, DID NOT GO TO THE FAR LEFT OR ANAPO (SEE BELOW), AND MAY WELL HAVE ADDED TO THE CONSERVATIVE TOTAL. THE NATION'S SECOND CITY, MEDELLIN, WENT 35 PERCENT CONSERVATIVE AND THE ANTIIOGUIA REGION AS A WHOLE, THE ONE-TIME CONSERVATIVE BASTION, APPEARS HEADED FOR A 50 PERCENT CONSERVATIVE VOTE TOTAL.

6. LIBERALS RETAIN MAJORITY. DESPITE THE CONSERVATIVE IMPROVEMENT, THE LIBERALS REMAIN FIRMLY IN THE MAJORITY POSITION WITH A PROJECTED TOTAL OF UWIGHTLY BETTER THAN 50 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL VOTE. PICKING OUT THE FORTUNES OF THE VARIOUS LIBERAL FACTIONS WILL BE ANOTHER MATTER. PRESIDENT LOPEZ, A VETERAN OF OVER THREE DECADES OF LIBERAL PARTY POLITICS, CLAIMED, PRIOR TO THE ELECTION, THAT THE VOTING WOULD NOT CLEARLY DEFINE ALIGNMENTS OR TRENDS AND ASKED RHETORICALLY HOW ANYBODY COULD INTERPRET THE RESULTS OF FIVE THOUSAND ELECTORAL LISTS.

7. WHILE NO LIBERAL FACTION GAINED A CLEAR-CUT ADVANTAGE IN THE EARLY VOTING, SOME TRENDS DO EMERGE. CARLOS LLERAS, A SOLID WINNER IN BOGOTA, DID NOT GAIN ENOUGH VOTES NATIONWIDE TO EMERGE AS THE FRONT-RUNNER. HE WILL PROBABLY END UP WITH FEWER VOTES THAN AMBASSADOR TURBAY, WHO DID NOT CAMPAIGN I COLOMBIA. TURBAY IS CONFIDENTIAL

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STRONGER NOW THAN HE WAS SIX MONTHS AGO BUT SOMEWHAT WEAKER THAN HE WAS A YEAR AGO. THE TWO EARLY LEADERS MAY HAVE CANCELLED ONE ANOTHER OUT AT THE MID-TERM TEST. BOTH, HOWEVER, ARE CERTAIN TO KEEP TRYING.

8. FOR THE FAR LEFT, IT WAS ANOTHER 3 PERCENT SHOWING. THE LEFTIST UPSURGE PREDICTED BY A U.S. POLLING ORGANIZATION DID NOT TAKE PLACE. DESPITE BETTER FINANCING AND ORGANIZATION, MOIR AND UNO,

THE PARTIES OF THE FAR LEFT, MADE NO IMPROVEMENT AT THE POLLS.

9. FOR ANAPO IT IS EVIDENTLY THE END OF THE LINE. GAINING ONLY 45,000 OF THE FIRST 1.2 MILLION VOTES COUNTED, THE POPULIST MOVEMENT OF FORMER STRONGMAN ROJAS PINILLA TRAILED EVEN THE SCANT UNOMOIR VOTE TOTAL. ANAPO, FIVE YEARS AFTER IT NEARLY OVERTURNED THE NATIONAL FRONT, HAS CEASED TO BE A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN COLOMBIAN POLITICS.

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